



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

## VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM 515.1

Marketing and  
Regulatory  
Programs

**subject:** Guidelines for Veterinary Services Program and Station Reviews

Animal and  
Plant Health  
Inspection  
Service

**Date:** December 1, 1998

Washington, DC  
20250

**To:** Area Veterinarians in Charge  
Directors, VS  
Chief Staff Veterinarians/Officers

### I. PURPOSE

This memorandum outlines procedures and responsibilities for program and station reviews approved by the Veterinary Services (VS) Management Team as a part of the VS Annual Review Plan. These guidelines do not cover reviews initiated by other Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) units or entities outside of the agency, nor do they apply to reviews initiated by individual VS Directors or Area Veterinarians in Charge (AVIC's).

Program and station reviews are conducted to review Veterinary Services and cooperative activities at the program or Area level with the purpose of improving the quality of program delivery. Information is obtained and assessed related to the type of activities conducted, effectiveness of program delivery, evidence of program success, efficiency of operations, and compliance with policies and regulations in achieving Agency goals. The review team gathers information through discussion with VS personnel, cooperators, and stakeholders, review of documentation, and activity site visits. Summary findings and recommendations are formalized in a written report. Finally, consideration is made for implementing recommendations at the Area or Program level.

The broad perspective brought to the review by a variety of reviewers who come from outside the Area or Program being reviewed is tempered by the brief time, usually one week, allotted for the review itself. Many of the observations made and findings of the review are qualitative and comparative in nature. While some reviewers may lack direct personal experience and history with the program or station, these same limitations can aid in bringing a fresh, unbiased perspective to the review. The reviewers' recommendations are not intended as "judgments" but as points of consideration for improving overall program service and delivery.



APHIS - Protecting American Agriculture

An Equal Opportunity Employer

## II. CANCELLATION

Previous issuance of VS Memorandum 515.1, dated April 16, 1992, is hereby canceled.

## III. DEFINITION

### A. Program Review

Program reviews are targeted at specific program areas (Import/Export, Tuberculosis, Interstate/Inspection) and can include activities being carried out at a local, area, regional, or national level. Examples of Program Reviews might include a review of a specific port operation such as Miami Airport, a review of Import/Export activities within a specific Area such as Florida, or a review of regional or national import/export activities.

### B. Station Review

A station review is an examination of the administrative controls, operational procedures, and accomplishments of all programs or selected VS and cooperative programs under the responsibility of a VS Area office. Thus Station Reviews are not targeted by activity or program area but are geographically defined by either a particular State or grouping of adjoining States under the direction of a single Area Veterinarian in Charge. Station reviews are intended to be comprehensive but may not be conducted to the same degree or detail as are Program Reviews.

## IV. COVERAGE

Station Reviews are intended to cover an array of programs within a specific Area, and Program Reviews are intended to cover one activity area in some depth. The Review Team should bring extensive technical, administrative, and managerial knowledge and experience to the review. The limited time available to conduct the review itself requires that careful planning be done prior to the review in terms of identifying and prioritizing what specific areas are to be covered, and to what degree.

Guidelines have been developed, and are included with this memorandum as numbered attachments, to address coverage of five major areas subject to review. These include: I. General Management, II. Administrative Systems, III. Program Areas, IV. Information Technology Resources and V. Special Initiatives. These attachments contain comprehensive checklists, with appropriate reference citations, to assist review team members in defining what areas need to be included in the review and an indication of the degree of coverage desired. These checklists were developed to aid those planning and conducting reviews. They were also intended to assist Area or Program personnel in better understanding what review teams will be looking for and in better preparing for a review.

Reviews will include examination and evaluation of one or more of the following:

A. An examination of the scope of VS activities and their alignment with USDA, APHIS, and VS mission and goals and program needs at the level being examined. Are we doing what we need to be doing? Are applicable regulations, policies, and procedures being followed? Are permissible program modifications being made to enhance mission accomplishment?

B. The effectiveness and efficiency of organizational structure and relationships with State, international, and industry organizations, as well as with other stakeholders and the general public.

C. Extent of compliance with appropriate laws, rules, regulations, agreements, and established program and administrative systems and procedures. The latter includes Information Resources Management systems and procedures.

D. An assessment of past performance in achieving program objectives.

E. An assessment of the effectiveness of current and alternative program strategies.

## V. REVIEW PROCESS

### A. Planning for Reviews

#### 1. Selection of Programs/Stations For Review

A number of criteria should be considered in identifying and selecting programs or stations for review. These include:

- a) a major change in program management personnel. Reviews conducted a few months after new personnel are in place have been found to be helpful to new managers during transition;
- b) administrative or program concerns or problems that may have been identified by other means (Prior to requesting a review based on this criteria, managers should seriously consider the nature of these concerns and whether the Program/Station Review is appropriate or whether other actions should be taken;
- c) new or revised administrative or program activities and responsibilities;
- d) a station/program reorganization; and
- e) the length of time since a previous review.

By June 30 of each year, the Director, Operational Support Staff (OSS) will send a letter to VS Management Team (VSMT) members requesting recommendations of Areas or Programs for review. VSMT members will obtain recommendations for reviews for the upcoming fiscal year from program managers within their organization (e.g., AVIC'S, Chief Staff Veterinarians, Regional staff, etc.). Consideration should be given to obtaining recommendations from State Veterinarians, industry representatives, and other stakeholders who may wish to recommend that their own station be reviewed or that particular programs be reviewed. Specific reasons should be provided for recommending a review and must be indicated in the response, which will be due in OSS by July 30.

The VSMT will make the final selection of stations and programs to be reviewed and will designate a team leader for each review. An Annual Review Plan, which identifies designated team leaders, will be approved by the VSMT and disseminated by OSS throughout VS prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year.

## 2. Defining the Scope/Information Gathering

The Director of the unit to be reviewed, generally the appropriate Regional Director, is responsible for consulting with federal and state program management on the purpose, scope, and nature of the review. Team leaders are responsible for planning, organizing, coordinating, and scheduling personnel and work activities associated with reviews. They are also responsible for assembling and requesting information required as background (e.g., reports and follow ups to previous reviews, organization charts, cooperative agreements, etc.). In addition, as appropriate, team leaders must consult with others (e.g., Deputy, Chief Staff Veterinarians, Director Animal Health Information (AHI), Regional Director, AVIC, as well as State and industry representatives, and other stakeholders who can provide information and recommend areas for review and suggest site visits and individuals to contact in carrying out the review.

## 3. Selection of Personnel to Conduct Reviews

Review team leaders will be selected by the VSMT. Team leaders will select experienced personnel from outside the Area or immediate program to serve as team members. Team Members will be selected based on their knowledge and experience and in accordance with the defined scope of the review and specific components to be emphasized in the course of the review. The scope of the review, size of the organization, variety of programs, and issues to be considered will influence the type and number of personnel designated to conduct the review. The Director of the organization to be reviewed is responsible for consulting with the designated team leader to provide insight on the purpose of the review and to discuss possible team members. The team leader will obtain approval from each team member's supervisor for their participation in the review and discuss participation with each member.

#### 4. Scheduling

Team leaders are responsible for contacting appropriate (the respective) Area/program managers and Director to establish a review schedule. The leader will provide OSS with projected starting and ending dates by October 30. OSS will update and distribute the Annual Review Plan to include projected starting and ending dates for reviews to be completed during the Fiscal Year.

#### 5. Expenses and Travel Authorization

Travel and per diem expenses incurred as a result of a review will be charged to the accounting code for the Director of the organization being reviewed. Travel authorization for individual team members will be issued by the Director's office that normally issues authorizations for those individuals.

#### 6. Team Consultation

Prior to the Review Team site visit, the team leader should provide written background documentation on the Area or program to be reviewed to team members and assign specific review responsibilities to each team member. The team leader will have at least one teleconference with team members prior to the visit to share information about the conduct of the review and to plan activities, schedule contacts, and plan review team travel during the site visit. This information will be shared with program management prior to the site visit. Team members will review appropriate Attachment Guidelines and make any contacts necessary prior to the visit to assist in planning their portion of the review. Every effort should be made by both the team leader and the individual team members to clarify each member's role and responsibilities as part of the team.

### B. Site Visit Activities

#### 1. Entrance Conference

The on-site review procedure must be preceded by an entrance conference with the Federal official in charge, State cooperators, and/or others as deemed appropriate. The purpose of this conference is to define the scope of the review and methods and procedures to be used and identify the information desired. In addition, this conference provides the Federal manager and/or State veterinarian with an opportunity to share ideas and concerns and to suggest who should be interviewed, what activities should be observed, etc. Review team members will be introduced at this time.

#### 2. On-site Review Procedures

During the course of the review, information will be collected by the review team through direct observations, interviews, and the review of documents (e.g.,

correspondence, program records, and reports). Team members must keep adequate notes, records, or work papers to document their findings and contributions to the report.

The attached numbered Guidelines should be utilized by individual review team members to ensure proper coverage of specific areas under review. These Guidelines contain comprehensive checklists covering what items need to be looked at under each specific review area and appropriate reference lists to policies, memoranda, and regulations that relate to activities within that specific area. These Guidelines are not intended to be inflexible but offer guidance on the scope and depth of coverage for the station or program review. Review team members should feel free to take the review beyond the specific checklist when findings indicate that this would be appropriate. There may also be instances in which it becomes apparent that there is need to modify the Guidelines as necessary because of the limited program activity or because of differences in program delivery. Every effort should be taken to clarify any problem or concern identified during the review. Team members should obtain copies of materials that document such concerns and ask various on-site personnel to help clarify any such findings so as to avoid any misunderstandings by review team members.

Should the finding of problem by the review team be of such concern that the team leader believes it must be corrected immediately or requires a more specific immediate follow-up action, the team leader should discuss it with the Director of the unit being reviewed for the Director's consideration and possible action.

### 3. Exit Conference

An exit conference with appropriate officials shall be held at the conclusion of the review. The purpose of the exit conference is to share general findings, such as strengths and weaknesses observed, to obtain clarification of facts, and to discuss major recommendations that may be in the final report. If available, a draft copy of the report may be given to the official in charge at this time.

## VI. REPORTING

Each team member will forward a written report to the team leader within 20 working days from the date the on-site review was completed. Recognizing deadline requirements, supervisors must allow review team members adequate time to finalize and submit their reports. A report inclusive of all major findings and recommendations will be prepared by the team leader. A suggested format is outlined in Appendix I. However, the review team leader may opt to use another format to effectively communicate findings and recommendations. Five copies of the report must be submitted to the Director of the organization reviewed within 30 working days from the completion of the on-site review.

## VII. FOLLOW-UP

The Director of the organization reviewed is responsible for follow-up.

### A. Comments

The Director of the program or station reviewed will transmit the final report to the AVIC or program manager of the unit, the State Veterinarian, the OSS Director, and the Deputy Administrator. The AVIC or program director will work with Area or program personnel to respond to the findings and recommendations contained in the report.

The manager of the Area or Program reviewed may want to check with the review team leader to clarify a team finding or recommendation. The team leader may want to include individual team members in the follow-up discussion.

### B. Subsequent Actions

The manager of the Area or program reviewed has the responsibility to go over the report findings and recommendations with other VS employees in their unit, appropriate Staff, State officials, and appropriate stakeholders in responding to the Report. The manager should prepare and send a written response to each recommendation to the Director of the unit. The response should contain actions necessary to carry out each recommendation or a response as to why that recommendation is not appropriate. Any actions planned in response to each recommendation should be documented.

Within 30 working days of receipt of the AVIC's or program manager's response, the Director will meet in person or by teleconference with the AVIC or program manager and the review team leader to discuss the review recommendations and the AVIC's or program manager's response. If appropriate, others (State Veterinarian, OSS representative, etc.) may also participate in this discussion.

Following this meeting, a written action plan prepared by the AVIC or program manager will summarize actions to be taken in response to the review recommendations. The plan will describe those actions necessary to close out the review. Copies of this plan will be distributed to the Director, the AVIC or program director, the OSS Director, and the Deputy Administrator. The AVIC or program manager and the Director then have the responsibility to ensure that the necessary actions are taken and to notify OSS when the review is considered closed.

C. Semiannual Status Reports

The OSS staff will publish a semiannual status report of the reviews indicating team leaders schedules, progress, completion dates, review closure dates, etc.

D. Summary of Station Review Recommendations

Following completion of station reviews during a fiscal year, regional representatives and team leaders will compile a summary of general recommendations for distribution to all AVIC's. This summary will not reference specific Areas reviewed. The recommendations contained in this summary will be distributed in order to improve quality and efficiency of administrative and program delivery throughout Veterinary Services.

/s/

Thomas E. Walton  
Acting Deputy Administrator  
Veterinary Services

Enclosures (Appendixes I and II)